

ARMY HEARING PROGRAM TALKING POINTS CALENDAR YEAR 2016

TECHNICAL INFORMATION PAPER No. 51-065-0817

This report provides summary information regarding the prevalence of hearing injury experienced by U.S. Army Soldiers in 2016. Soldiers who completed a DD Form 2215 (*Reference Audiogram*) or DD Form 2216 (*Hearing Conservation Data*) during Calendar Year 2016 (CY16) were included in the analysis. Information is broken out by Service component and will be updated annually.

TOTAL ARMY STATISTICS FOR CY16

24% of Soldiers have some degree of hearing loss:	21% Active Duty
	27% Army National Guard
	28% Army Reserve
5% of Soldiers have a clinically significant hearing loss:	4% Active Duty
	8% Army National Guard
	7% Army Reserve
2% of Soldiers have a hearing loss that requires a Fit-for-Duty (Readiness) evaluation:	1% Active Duty
	2% Army National Guard
	2% Army Reserve
6% of Soldiers evaluated in CY16 experienced a significant change in hearing (Significant Threshold Shift) in this calendar year (Incidence):	4% Active Duty
	7% Army National Guard
	11% Army Reserve
26% of Soldiers evaluated in CY16 experienced a significant change in hearing (Significant Threshold Shift) at some time in their military career (Prevalence):	22% Active Duty
	29% Army National Guard
	34% Army Reserve

BACKGROUND

Hearing health in the Army has improved over time, largely due to the dedicated work of hearing health experts. However, noise-induced hearing loss and associated problems have not been eliminated. The Army Hearing Program continually evolves to address hearing health challenges, and maintains the momentum to build iteratively upon previous success.

The Army Hearing Program traces its origins to the late 1960s with the accession of 11 uniformed audiologists. The need for more audiologists and a robust Hearing Conservation Program was quickly realized after initial studies indicated that approximately 35–40% of Infantry, Armor, and Artillery Soldiers had a clinically significant hearing loss (H-2 profile or greater). In the early 1970s, an additional 25 audiologists were commissioned with a mandate to spend at least 50% of their time performing hearing conservation efforts outside of the clinic.

Through the efforts of the Army Hearing Conservation Program, the hearing health of the Army improved. Data from 1989 showed a marked improvement in hearing health with only 15–20% of Infantry, Armor, and Artillery Soldiers showing clinically significant hearing loss. By 2000, the percent of Soldiers with clinically significant hearing loss had dropped to about 10% or less. This percentage was maintained throughout the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with very little change in the number of Soldiers who developed a clinically significant hearing loss.

The Army Hearing Conservation Program changed to the Army Hearing Program in 2008 with a broadened focus. The four areas of emphasis include: [Hearing Readiness](#), [Operational Hearing Services](#), [Clinical Hearing Services](#), and [Hearing Conservation](#).

*See Appendix for more detailed information

APPENDIX A

Detailed Total Army Statistics

24% of Soldiers with some degree of hearing loss:

- Any threshold outside the range of normal hearing sensitivity (greater than 25 dB)
- Data: Defense Occupational and Environmental Health Readiness System – Hearing Conservation (DOEHRS-HC) Data Repository (DR), Soldiers who had a DD 2215 or DD 2216 completed in CY16—Ad hoc report

Active Duty		Data
% Hearing Impaired	20.7%	92,856 / 448,491
% Normal Hearing	79.3%	355,635 / 448,491
Army National Guard (ARNG)		Data
% Hearing Impaired	27.3%	71,112 / 260,384
% Normal Hearing	72.7%	189,272 / 260,384
Army Reserve (USAR)		Data
% Hearing Impaired	28.5%	44 248 / 155,986
% Normal Hearing	71.5%	111,558 / 155,986
Total Army		Data
% Hearing Impaired	24.1%	208,396 / 864,861
% Normal Hearing	75.9%	656,465 / 864,861

Table 1 – Soldiers with some degree of hearing loss.

5% of Soldiers evaluated in CY16 have a clinically significant hearing loss:

- A hearing profile greater than H-1
- Data: DOEHRS-HC DR, Most recent hearing test (either a DD 2215 or DD 2216) for Soldiers completed in CY16—Army Profile—by Testing Installation—by Major Command (MACOM), Zip/PAS/UIC

Active Duty		Data
% Clinically Significant Hearing Loss	3.98%	19,335 / 485,205
Army National Guard (ARNG)		Data
% Clinically Significant Hearing Loss	7.61%	17,723 / 232,879
Army Reserve (USAR)		Data
% Clinically Significant Hearing Loss	7.08%	9,211 / 130,166
Total Army		Data
% Clinically Significant Hearing Loss	5.45%	46,269 / 848,250

Table 2 – Soldiers with a clinically significant hearing loss.

2% of Soldiers have a hearing loss that required a fit-for-duty (Readiness) evaluation:

- An H-3 Hearing Profile
- Data: DOEHRHS-HC DR, Most recent hearing test (either a DD 2215 or DD 2216) for Soldiers completed in CY16—Army Profile—by Testing Installation—by MACOM, Zip/PAS/UIC

Active Duty		Data
% Require Fit-for-Duty Evaluation		4,611 / 485,205
Army National Guard (ARNG)		Data
% Require Fit-for-Duty Evaluation		5,490 / 232,879
Army Reserve (USAR)		Data
% Require Fit-for-Duty Evaluation		3,006 / 130,166
Total Army		Data
% Require Fit-for-Duty Evaluation		13,107 / 848,250

Table 3 – Soldiers who required a fit-for-duty (Readiness) evaluation.

6% of Soldiers evaluated in CY16 experienced a significant change in hearing (Significant Threshold Shift) in this calendar year (Incidence):

- New cases of significant threshold shift (STS) on periodic evaluation:
 - An STS is defined as an average change, from the reference hearing test, of 10 decibels (dB) or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 hertz (Hz) in either ear
- Data: DOEHRHS-HC DR, Soldiers who had a DD 2216 completed in CY16—Positive STS—by Testing Installation—by MACOM

Active Duty		Data
% New Cases		17,425 / 422,789
Army National Guard (ARNG)		Data
% New Cases		16,485 / 235,331
Army Reserve (USAR)		Data
% New Cases		15,562 / 136,150
Total Army		Data
% New Cases		49,472 / 794,270

Table 4 – Soldiers who experienced a significant change in hearing in current CY.

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26% of Soldiers evaluated in CY16 experienced a significant change in hearing (Significant Threshold Shift) at some point in their military career (Prevalence):

- Prevalence of STS on Periodic test for Soldiers tested in this calendar year
- Data: DOEHRHS-HC DR, Soldiers who had a DD 2215 or DD 2216 completed in CY16 and had an STS in the current or a previous calendar year—Ad hoc report

Active Duty		Data
% STS Prevalence	22.18%	99,467 / 448,491
Army National Guard (ARNG)		Data
% STS Prevalence	29.00%	75,520 / 260,384
Army Reserve (USAR)		Data
% STS Prevalence	33.54%	52,317 / 155,986
Total Army		Data
% STS Prevalence	26.28%	227,304 / 864,861

Table 5 - Soldiers tested in CY with significant in hearing at some point in their military career.